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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to identify the tasks which make up the day of library/media specialists in Mississippi. A jury of library/media specialists and professional administrators reviewed tasks identified by the national model and the Mississippi State Board of Education and developed a questionnaire which identified 21 selected library/media related tasks and other tasks frequently assigned to instructional personnel. The instrument was mailed to 300 randomly selected Mississippi media specialists who were asked to identify their time per task in percentage increments to reflect a total of 100% of their working day. Questionnaires were returned by 101 media specialists, or 34% of the sample. The results of this study are compared to a similar study of Tennessee library/media specialists and to teachers in the NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals) Model Schools Project in 1977. The results indicate that Mississippi public school media specialists spend more time "keeping study hall" (19.28%) than any of the other 21 items. "Working with students or teachers in the instructional program" ranked second (10.27%). Following a discussion of the implications of the study, the paper identifies 23 technical and administrative tasks for which media specialists are responsible. (THC)

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HOW EFFICIENT ARE MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIANS?

Ben E. Pitts

Although national reading scores are improving, a recently released Gallup Poll indicates that the public still gives schools low marks. After several years of lagging confidence in public education, the survey reports that only 9 percent of adults participating in the annual survey gave the public schools in their community "A" and only 27% would award the public schools a "B".

Whether it's Proposition 2 1/2 in Massachusetts or Proposition 13 in Califon. the harsh reality is that a tax paying public is demanding more than ever from public education, has doubts about the ability of public education to fill those needs and is reluctant to raise needed taxes.

These problems in funding cause administrators at all levels to take action. Library programs are being dropped in many situations and severely curtailed in others. The question arises "Who or what program will be the first to go?"

A search of library and education literature reveals in most states cuts begin with music, art, library, and athletic programs. Nearly 85% of the average school system's budget is tied up in personnel cost. When the dust settles, what really happens is that people not directly involved in basic education are cut.

Although libraries or media centers may not be the first to be eliminated, they are among the first to be considered. The reason for this may be two-fold: the lay public may see library/media specialists as individuals without an assigned class or a clearly accountable instructional responsibility, while many believe the library tasks could be carried on by paraprofessionals, aides, or clerks at half the salary paid the professional.

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There is evidence to suggest that some school administrators, parents, and classroom teachers view the library program in a similar manner. Frequently, the classroom teacher's effectiveness is measured by student proficiency test scores. Tangible results of media services on the instructional program are often unclear.

PURPOSES

The purpose of this study was to ascertain some insight into what library/media specialists are doing or are not doing that fosters a perception of nonessentiality. An instrument identifying 21 selected library/media related tasks and other tasks frequently assigned to instructional personnel was developed by a jury of library/media specialists and professional administrators and mailed to 300 randomly selected Mississippi library/media specialists. The tasks identified by the national model and the Mississippi State Board of Education were considered in developing the questionnaire.

Those tasks which the jury felt most nearly reflected the activities of Mississippi library/media specialists were chosen. Media aides and media technicians were not considered a part of the current library scene in Mississippi public schools. Consequently, Mississippi public school library/media specialists must perform tasks often assigned to staff personnel.

Library/media specialists were asked to identify their time use in percentage increments to reflect a total of 100% of their working day. The amount of time devoted to each task reflects the position of Mississippi library/media specialists in regard to their role change from traditional librarians to media specialists.

RESULTS

Returns were received from 101 library/media specialists, or 33%

of the sample. It may be safely assumed that responses for this study were from library/media specialists who were concerned enough to take the time to analyze their daily routine and reply to the questionnaire. The results of the study are limited but the results are from dedicated professionals. Table 1 shows weekly percentages of time devoted to selected media task compared to a similar study (1) of Tennessee library/media specialists and to teachers in the NASSP Model Schools Project, described later.

Mississippi public school library/media specialists spend more time "keeping study hall" (18.28%) than on any of the other twenty-one items. Ranking second was "working with students or teachers in the instructional program" (10.27%).

Those two items on which Mississippi public school library/media specialists spend the least amount of their time (less than 1%) were "security related tasks" and "bus duty."

Mississippi public school library/media specialists spend 8% more time "keeping study hall" than Tennessee public school library/media specialists, and 4.28% more time "keeping study hall" than teachers in the NASSP Model School Project.

An overall comparison between Mississippi public school library/media specialists and Tennessee public school library/media specialists indicates no significant disparity in the percentage of time spent on the other items in the questionnaire. The disparity range is from .43% to 3.26% on all other items.

A lack of secretarial help is reflected in the 6.7% of the library/media specialists' time in technical processing. The low percentage of time spent in media production reaffirms the presupposition that Mississippi public school libraries are still essentially print-oriented or concerned with books.

The data indicate that library/media specialists continue to devote a considerable amount of time to unrelated activities: "housekeeping" (8.04%). "keeping study hall," (18.28%), "bus duty" (.74%), "security related tasks" (.93%), and "equipment repair" (1.7%).

The results of this study are important to Mississippi library/media specialists because supervisory management theories are being implemented by administrators in national, state and local situations. Efficiency in industrial and business production is often measured in terms of useful application of time in attaining goals. Wasted time, defined as time not directly or indirectly supporting one's effort to attain goals or objectives, can be seen in this study. The public is asking for time accountability of educators and the proficiency test program may be an assessment of time use as well as goal attainment for educators.

Nine items may be identified as problems for educators and library/media specialists. These include: lack of planning, lack of priorities, over commitment, management by crisis, haste, paperwork and reading, routine and trivia, visitors, telephones, meetings, indecision and lack of delegation.

In 1977 a study conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), twenty-three schools were surveyed. In this NASSP Model Schools Project teachers were asked how they divided their time among eighteen activities during one week. Teachers in these innovative schools indicated their time was divided as follows:

ACTIVITY	*PERCENTAGE OF TIME*
Supervising (overseeing students)	*14%*
Informing (subject matter)	*14%*

Relaxing and eating	8%
Presenting (motivating)	7%
Discussing in Scheduled groups	7%
Planning and Developing	6%
Drilling and Coaching	6%
Doing Clerical Work	5%
Conferring about Programs	5%
Advising, counseling	5%
Evaluating	5%
Checking materials	3%
Listening/observing	3%

In the twenty-three model schools, where role descriptions have been refined and where ample instructional personnel were available, teachers better utilized their time. A little more than 16% of teacher's time was expended in areas of little or no production(s). Time utilization experts suggest to those who want to improve the use of their time the following steps:

(1) Learn how you presently use your time.

(2) Analyze its use to your goals and objectives.

(3) Begin to dissolve the time wasters.

Library/media specialists function differently than teachers, partly because their goals and specific role description is different. But like everyone else they too want to use their time effectively.

Table 1

Weekly percentage of time Mississippi Library/Media Specialists devote to selected Library/Media tasks compared to Tennessee Library/Media Specialists and Teachers in a NASSP Model School Project.

* *No comparable task included in NASSP Survey.*

** *Since all tasks in the NASSP Survey are not germane, the total percentage is of no significance.*

1.	*Acquisitions (ordering materials)*	5%	4.3%	7.7%
2.	*Technical Processing (checking invoices, typing, filing)*	3%	6.7%	8.4%
3.	*Reference Services*	*	9.6%	7.1%
4.	*Original cataloging*	*	3.8%	4.2%
5.	*Production of Instructional Material*	*	4.78%	2.1%
6.	*Teaching library skills*	14%	6.41%	6.5%
7.	*Supervising clerical workers*	*	3.25%	2.5%
8.	*Working with students or teachers in the instructional program*	7%	10.27%	10.2%
9.	*Housekeeping chores (shelving books, picking up, etc.)*	11%	8.04%	5.5%
10.	*Promotional activities*	7%	3.3%	7.7%
11.	*Planning and organizing activities*	11%	4.24%	7.5%
12.	*Relaxing and eating*	8%	3.35%	7.7%
13.	*Lunchroom duty*	*	1.32%	.4%
14.	*Keeping study hall or supervising students*	14%	18.28%	10.2%
15.	*Bus duty*	*	.74%	1.3%
16.	*Attending school activities*	*	2.21%	2.5%
17.	*Conferring informally*	8%	2.28%	4.1%
18.	*Professional development*	*	2.37%	3.0%
19.	*Security related tasks*	*	.93%	1.4%
20.	*Equipment repair or maintenance*	*	1.7%	3.3%
21.	*Other*	*	2.13%	2.2%
	TOTAL			

It is apparent that librarian/media specialists feel the frustration resulting from the difference between written and actual role descriptions and ideal and real time use. Management by crisis, lack of planning, lack of priorities, overcommitment, haste, paperwork and reading, routine and trivia, and lack of delegation seem to be the big time wasters for media specialists.

According to the data collected from Mississippi public school librarians, 32.66 percent of the time is used in activities of the lowest priority not related to media activities. Translated into industrial terms, approximately 33 percent of media person hours are unproductive or unprofitable to the goals and objectives of the role. So 33 percent of the media person's salary is not spent for media production, media goal or objective accomplishment, or student media "profit." In educational terms, 33 percent of the media person's time is not available for support of teachers through media production, improvement of student academic skills, reduction of the dropout rate, or improvement or student study skills.

Implications

"Good managers control their time so that others can also control theirs. But even before worrying about time as such, management must be interested in what people are busy with. Time thus becomes an important part of good employee relations and customer service"(2)

Principals, teachers, and media persons are busy people. Many times, educators are exemplary in their busy-ness, and there's never an idle moment. On the other hand, this busy-ness, not idleness, may be the devil's workshop. If media specialists are to use their time wisely, principals must first manage their own tasks, their own staff, and their buildings to relieve media specialists of the multitude of minutes devoted to the "wrong" things.

The overflow of principal tasks being assigned to or assumed by media

specialists must be reduced. Activities such as housekeeping chores, technical processing, supervising study halls, security, equipment repair and maintenance are tasks administrators can delegate to more appropriate aides, paraprofessionals, and custodians. Almost 34 percent of the time media specialists spend in these tasks actually contributes to administrative organizational order and control. Media specialists can be relieved of these urgent matters by administrative supervision of media activities and delegation to volunteer parents, students, citizens, or other personnel.

Principals should look carefully at the 18 percent of the time used in study hall supervision. A security guard, employed at half the cost of a professional librarian, can marshal study hall very successfully if a quiet, orderly group is the instructional objective. Media specialists may spend time in these nonessential media roles because of administrative demand rather than need. In this case, media specialists must be motivated to analyze their time use and identify nonproductive habits. Supervision and evaluation may be the management key to personnel change at this level.

"The National Institute of Education reports that during the last five years, educational costs have risen 95% with a decrease of approximately 3% of school enrollment and a poorer set of achievement results. Here we have a loss in both efficiency and effectiveness."(3) Undoubtedly this statement refers not only to educational managers but also to teachers and media specialists. The retention rate, the achievement scores of students, and the public perception of schools will improve with the efficient and effective use of media centers and media specialists in clearly identified, principal-supervised media center responsibilities.

What should a library media specialist be doing in Mississippi? The authors recommend this role descriptions in schools, the experience of the

authors in administration and media service, and the goals of the ACA and NEA.

Librarian/media specialists are responsible to the school principals who coordinates the school media center by fulfilling administratively educational and technical responsibilities as follows:

1. *Planning, organizing and implementing media program.*
2. *Scheduling, training and supervising clerical staff.*
3. *Preparing and administering the media center budget.*
4. *Integrating the media program and services with the educational program.*
5. *Preparing statistical and financial reports.*
6. *Publicizing the services and resources of the media center.*
7. *Evaluating the building media program, services and materials.*
8. *Creating and maintaining an atmosphere conducive to effective media center use by students and faculty.*
9. *Providing materials for the professional growth of the staff.*
10. *Participation in curriculum study and revision and keeping current in all aspects of the school educational program including data of student progress.*
11. *Participating in and planning departmental and faculty meetings.*
12. *Participating in classroom planning for individual student needs, interests, goals, abilities and progress rate.*
13. *Providing media service, guidance and resources to implement the classroom planning described above.*
14. *Sharing the responsibilities with classroom teachers for instructing students in the use of the media center and library.*
15. *Assisting teachers and students in the production of learning materials to supplement those available through other channels.*
16. *Providing in-service training for the teacher staff in the coordination with the principal on the center procedures and available sources.*
17. *Assisting students to develop competency in independent study skills in the library or in the media center.*
18. *Acting as a resource consultant for teachers designing media and working with students in their research and other learning activities.*

19. *Providing and stimulating reading guidance in cooperation with English teachers.*

20. *Establishing and following procedures for selecting, ordering, processing, organizing and circulating materials and development of a procedures manual.*

21. *Maintaining accurate records of media center holdings.*

22. *Weeding obsolete and worn materials.*

23. *Maintaining audiovisual equipment through service personnel so that optimum use of it can be made by the staff.*

A working job description should provide an opportunity for decision makers to understand what librarian/media specialists do. It may also, while improving services, help media persons be more efficiently accountable for their time and efforts. Once librarian/media specialists are doing the right job well, they will be viewed as essential when personnel are cut.

1. Pitts, Ben E. and Joe Fields. "How Efficient Are Tennessee Public School Librarians?" Tennessee Education 8:3, 9-18.

2. Hayes, James. "No Time to Spare," Management Review. 67:9, 18FF.

3. McKenzie, Alec. "Time Management," Columbia University Conference for School Superintendents, March 1975.

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